

# Statistics Weekly

Thursday, 7 March 1991

## *The week in statistics ...*

- Retail trade falls in real terms 2
- Exchange rate boosts foreign debt 2
- Vehicle registrations trend down 3
- Home building approvals — has the trough finally bottomed out? 4
- Capital investment down and plans for future trimmed 4
- Mining boosts December quarter profits 5
- Manufacturing input costs still falling due to lower oil prices 6
- Manufacturing in brief 7
- The first national ABS profile of Australia's Aboriginal people 8
- New major resource for secondary Australian Studies 9
- Feature article 9
- All the week's releases 10
- Calendar of key releases up to 19 March 11
- The latest ...
  - key State indicators 11
  - key national indicators 12

## Retail trade falls in real terms



Seasonally adjusted retail turnover in the December 1990 quarter fell by 1.6 per cent in real terms over September 1990 quarter, the largest fall since June quarter 1983. Turnover was also down 1.6 per cent on the December 1989 quarter.

RETAIL TURNOVER  
At average 1984-85 prices  
Seasonally adjusted

|           | \$m    | Percentage change      |   |
|-----------|--------|------------------------|---|
|           |        | From preceding quarter | From corresponding quarter of previous year |
| 1990 —    |        |                        |   |
| March     | 14,841 | -0.1                   | 1.4   |
| June      | 14,796 | -0.3                   | 1.4   |
| September | 14,858 | 0.4                    | 0.4   |
| December  | 14,620 | -1.6                   | -1.6  |

The decline over September 1990 quarter was evident in a number of industries, notably hardware stores and jewellers (down 9.1%), furniture stores (down 7.5%) and newsagents (down 8.6%). Industries to show increases included grocers, confectioners and tobacconists (1.1%), footwear stores (2.6%) and pharmacies (0.7%).

On a State basis New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania all recorded decreases of around 2 per cent compared with September 1990 quarter. The only States to record increases were Queensland and South Australia.

For further information, order the publication *Retail Trade, Australia (8501.0)*, or contact Bill Powell on (06) 252 6132.

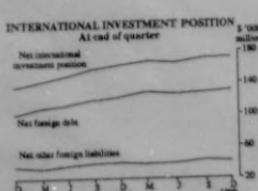
## Exchange rate boosts foreign debt

Net foreign liabilities at 31 December 1990 totalled \$172,363 million. This was an increase of \$674 million, or 0.4 per cent, on the position at the end of the September quarter.

Australia's net foreign debt of \$130,771 million accounted for over three quarters of the level of net foreign liabilities at 31 December 1990. It was up 1.9 per cent on the previous quarter, due largely to exchange rate movements (depreciation of \$A) and other changes, partly offset by capital transactions.

There was a net capital inflow of \$855 million during the December quarter 1990, made up of a net inflow of foreign investment into Australia of \$2,984 million, partly offset by a net outflow of Australian investment abroad of \$2,129 million.

*Continued ...*



Net investment income payable abroad during the December quarter was \$4,234 million, up \$742 million, or 21 per cent, on the amount payable in the September quarter.

AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT POSITION  
\$A thousand million

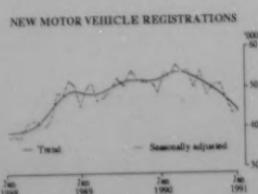
|                                       | Level at end of |               |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
|                                       | September 1990  | December 1990 |
| Foreign investment in Australia       |                 |               |
| Borrowing from abroad                 | 159.5           | 164.7         |
| Other investment                      | 98.0            | 99.6          |
| Total                                 | 257.6           | 264.3         |
| Australian investment abroad          | 85.9            | 91.9          |
| Net international investment position |                 |               |
| Net foreign debt                      | 128.3           | 130.8         |
| Net other liabilities                 | 43.4            | 41.6          |
| Total                                 | 171.7           | 172.4         |

For the year ended December quarter 1990, the ratio of net investment income payable to exports of goods and services was 25.5 per cent, a fall of 0.2 percentage points on the ratio recorded for the year ended September 1990. The ratio of net interest payable on foreign debt to exports of goods and services for the year ended 31 December 1990 was 19.7 per cent, compared with 20.2 per cent for the year ended a quarter earlier.

For further information, order the publication Foreign Investment, Australia, Preliminary (5307.0), or contact Frank Bingham on (06) 252 6252.

## Vehicle registrations trend down

Vehicle registrations for January 1991 (36,344 vehicles) were 17.8 per cent below those for January 1990. On a seasonally adjusted basis there was a small increase of 0.8 per cent from 43,629 in December 1990 to 43,963 in January 1991. Seasonally adjusted car and station wagon registrations rose by 0.8 per cent and other vehicles by 0.7 per cent between December and January. The trend estimate, however, declined for the ninth month in succession, with a fall of 3.1 per cent in January 1991.

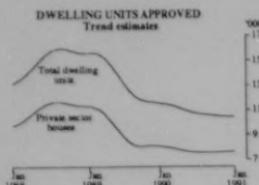


NEW MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS, JANUARY 1991  
Seasonally adjusted

| Vehicle type                  | Number | Percentage change from |                        |
|-------------------------------|--------|------------------------|------------------------|
|                               |        | Previous month         | month of previous year |
| Motor cars and station wagons | 34,827 | 0.8                    | -16.9                  |
| Other vehicles                | 9,137  | 0.7                    | -22.2                  |
| Total                         | 43,963 | 0.8                    | -18.0                  |

For further information, order the publication Registrations of New Motor Vehicles, Australia, Preliminary (9301.0), or contact Kevin Yeadon on (06) 252 6255.

## Home building approvals — has the trough finally bottomed out?



There was a 10.1 per cent increase in seasonally adjusted dwelling approvals between December 1990 and January 1991 resulting in a further slowing of the recent downward trend.

The total included a 9.5 per cent rise in private sector house building approvals (see table below).

DWELLING UNITS APPROVED, JANUARY 1991

|                     | Private sector houses |                                     | Total dwelling units |                                     |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                     | No.                   | Percentage change on previous month | No.                  | Percentage change on previous month |
|                     |                       |                                     |                      |                                     |
| Original            | 6,760                 | 7.3                                 | 9,189                | 8.9                                 |
| Seasonally adjusted | 7,792                 | 9.5                                 | 10,784               | 10.1                                |
| Trend estimate      | 7,646                 | 0.4                                 | 10,466               | -0.1                                |

The trend series for total dwelling units approved has almost levelled out in January 1991 following continual decline since March 1989. The trend series for private sector house approvals is now showing a small upward movement; however additional observations will be required to confirm any longer term upward movement in the trend. Users should take care in analysing the movements in the trend series for the most recent observations. As the November, December, and January estimates have shown, significant revisions to the trend can result from volatility in the seasonally adjusted series.

The value of total building approvals (residential and non-residential) increased by 11.4 per cent to \$1,668.3 million in January 1991, seasonally adjusted, but was 40.2 per cent lower than the exceptionally high January 1990 figure of \$2,791.8 million.

The trend in the value of total building approved is still showing a consistent decline to January 1991. The trend (to October 1990) in the value of non-residential building approved shows a continuation of the decline evident since the beginning of 1990.

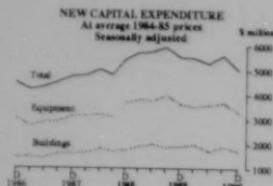
*For further information, order the publication Building Approvals, Australia (8731.0), or contact Janet Flynn on (06) 252 6067.*

## Capital investment down and plans for future trimmed

Preliminary estimates of new capital expenditure for the December quarter 1990 revealed capital expenditure well short of expectations of businesses. Businesses also revised down their estimate of future capital expenditure for the six months to June 1991.

*Continued ...*

Actual expenditure in the December quarter was \$7,305 million compared with an expectation for the period of \$8,223 million reported by businesses in the September quarter survey.



This lower than expected outcome for the December quarter has resulted in an 11 per cent decline in capital expenditure compared with September quarter (on a seasonally adjusted constant price basis), and a 9 per cent decline compared with the corresponding period last year.

Between the September and December surveys businesses revised down their expected expenditure for the six months to June 1991 from \$13,348 million to \$13,122 million. As a result current expectation of businesses for 1990-91 is \$27,499 million which is 4 per cent less than the expectations reported in the September survey and 7 per cent less than the expectations reported in the June quarter 1990 survey.

The actual outcome for 1990-91 will depend on a number of factors but based on previous experience it is likely to be 5 to 9 per cent less than capital expenditure recorded in 1989-90.

NEW CAPITAL EXPENDITURE  
Percentage change

| Type of asset                  | Seasonally adjusted at 1984-85 prices |                             |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                                | From Sept. to Dec. quarter 1990       | From Dec. 1989 to Dec. 1990 |
| Buildings and structures       | -10                                   | -10                         |
| Equipment, plant and machinery | -11                                   | -9                          |
| Total new capital expenditure  | -11                                   | -9                          |

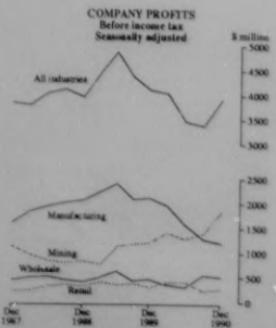
For further information, order the publication Private New Capital Expenditure, Preliminary (5625.0), or contact Jack Brzozowski on (06) 252 5623.

## Mining boosts December quarter profits

Profits before income tax for companies with more than 30 employees are estimated to be \$4,640 million for the December quarter 1990. In seasonally adjusted terms this is an increase of 16 per cent over the September quarter 1990, the first increase since the June quarter 1989.

The rise in profits is largely attributable to the mining industry which shows a 33 per cent increase over the September quarter 1990. The other broad industry sector showing an increase is retail trade with an increase of 15 per cent, in seasonally adjusted terms, over the September quarter 1990.

Manufacturing recorded its fourth consecutive decrease in profits before tax, down 6 per cent in the quarter, while wholesale trade recorded a 6 per cent decrease in the December quarter after a large increase in the September quarter.



When December quarter 1990 company profits (before income tax) is compared with the corresponding quarter for 1989 and 1988 it is 9 per cent and 7 per cent lower, respectively.

#### COMPANY PROFITS BEFORE INCOME TAX

December quarter 1990

Percentage change

|               | December<br>quarter 1988 | December<br>quarter 1989 |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mining        | 121                      | 54                       |
| Manufacturing | -42                      | -43                      |
| Wholesale     | 19                       | 9                        |
| Retail        | -16                      | -12                      |
| Total         | -7                       | -9                       |

For further information, order the publication Company Profits, Australia (5651.0), or contact Peter Crowe on (06) 252 5617.

## Manufacturing input costs still falling due to lower oil prices

The price indexes of materials used in manufacturing industries fell by 3.7 per cent in December 1990.

The decrease was mainly due to lower prices for imported and domestic crude petroleum, but world oil prices had earlier been largely responsible for the 9 per cent increase in the index in the year to December.

For home produced materials, decreased prices for domestic crude petroleum were partly offset by increased prices in December for live animals.

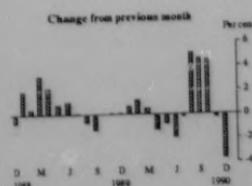
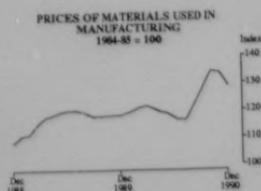
The decrease for imported materials of 1.7 per cent also resulted mainly from lower prices for crude petroleum and condensates. However, because of shipment lags, the full effect of lower world prices on imported crude has yet to be fully reflected in the index.

#### PRICE INDEXES OF MATERIALS USED IN MANUFACTURING

DECEMBER 1990

Percentage change

| Source of materials | From previous month | From corresponding month of previous year |
|---------------------|---------------------|---|
| Imported            | -1.7                | 7.8                                       |
| Home produced       | -4.7                | 9.6                                       |
| All manufacturing   | -3.7                | 9.0                                       |



## ABS develops a framework for tourism statistics

by Stan Fleetwood, Supervisor, Tourism Statistics Section

The tourism industry has undergone changes in recent years that could arguably be more accurately described as revolutionary than evolutionary. The rapid growth in tourist activity, particularly in international tourism, has given rise to an industry that is far more sophisticated than it was in the past. This is clearly seen in the area of research, which has become increasingly necessary to provide accurate input into major policy and investment decisions. As a result, information sources, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) have experienced increasing demands to provide more and better data.

A substantial amount of statistical data is produced relating to various aspects of the tourism industry. However, as any researcher in the tourism business knows, information is produced by a wide variety of sources. Statistical collections have tended to be developed independently of each other with little commonality of definitions or concepts. As a result, much of the statistical data available from different collections cannot be linked, thus reducing their total potential value. For example, when different surveys talk of "visitor" numbers they frequently mean different things. So don't be surprised if you hear different claims about the growth in visitor numbers! If it's any consolation, most other countries are in the same boat. International organisations, like the World Tourism Organisation and the United Nations Statistical Office, have worked to develop common definitions, which are gradually being adopted by member countries, but we are still a long way from having a common set of standards between countries, let alone between organisations within a country.

This problem has, of course, long been recognised in the tourism statistics community. The ABS is now addressing this issue by developing a framework for tourism statistics. A draft framework has been developed for comment and input from interested users and collectors. The approach taken in the draft framework will be reviewed in the light of such input, following which a first edition will be produced.

The framework is an attempt to provide a structure within which all tourism statistical collections would fit. The framework would provide a set of concepts and definitions that could be adopted in all collections. Data from each collection could be "mapped" within the structure and related to data from other collections. Differences in coverage of various surveys could be identified and allowed for in linking their data. The use of common classification systems and category definitions would, for example, significantly improve researchers' ability to relate data from the ABS Survey of Tourist Accommodation with the Bureau of Tourism Research's Domestic Tourism Monitor.

The framework takes the approach that "tourism statistics" covers all visitors (domestic and international) and not just recreational tourists. The statistics included are those which in some way measure or describe the activities of these visitors. The focal point of these statistics is the transaction in which a visitor obtains a product (or service) from a supplier.

*Continued page iv*

## Statistics Weekly

### Synopsis of articles, February 1991

**7 February 1991**

Lower exports drive up seasonally adjusted current account deficit

In seasonally adjusted terms, the current account deficit for December 1990 rose \$412 million to \$1,775 million.

Car industry decline in eighth month

New motor vehicle registrations fell by 7.1 per cent to 43,607 in December compared with November 1990, in seasonally adjusted terms. This also represented a fall of 10.6 per cent compared with December 1989.

Another setback for building industry?

The seasonally adjusted number of private houses approved in December 1990 decreased by 12.4 per cent compared with November 1990. Total dwelling units approved decreased by 10.9 per cent in the same period.

Prices of manufactured goods up — petroleum prices still major factor

Prices of manufactured goods rose by 1.1 per cent in November 1990, the third successive monthly rise of more than 1 per cent.

Larger increase in prices of house building materials

Prices for materials used in house building increased by 0.6 per cent in November 1990.

**14 February 1991**

Private sector receives 39 per cent of government construction spending

The government sector spent a total of \$20,567 million during the financial year 1988-89 on construction activity. Of this total, 39 per cent (\$8,088 million) went in payments to private sector contractors.

Decline in Christianity continues

At the 1986 Census, 73 per cent of Australians responded to the religion question with a Christian denomination, 13 per cent said they had no religion and 2 per cent responded with a non-Christian religion.

Award rates of pay indexes

Statistics on award rates of pay are published monthly by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in the form of indexes, for full-time adult employees.

New guide to statistics on women

The new publication *An Index of Information About Women* will improve and assist access to the wide range of data published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on women's social and economic status.

**21 February 1991**

Transportation the main cause of larger CPI increase

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 2.7 per cent between September and December quarters and by 6.9 per cent since December quarter 1989.

Negative trend in retail trade

Trend estimates of current price retail turnover for the last two months have fallen, the first time this has occurred since the trend series began in 1965. The series shows an average decrease of 0.1 per cent per month for the three months ended December 1990.

Male full-time employment falls

A fall in the number of males employed full-time was the main component of the decrease in total employment in January 1991. The number of persons unemployed rose to its highest level since September 1983. Since that time however, total employment has risen by just over 1.5 million and, while the number of persons unemployed is similar, the present unemployment rate is markedly lower (8.4 per cent in January 1991 compared with 10.3 per cent in September 1983).

## Synopsis of articles, February 1991 - continued

### 21 February 1991 - continued

#### Down turn in the rural sector

First estimates from the latest Agricultural Finance Survey showed that the turnover of farming management units decreased by 3 per cent from \$20,272 million in 1988-89 to \$19,586 million in 1989-90.

#### Road freight statistics improved following coverage survey

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates of interstate road freight movements are now based on a survey of operators accounting for some 84 per cent of the total freight moved.

### 28 February 1991

#### Lower oil prices lead to turnaround in manufacturing index

Prices of manufactured goods fell by 0.6 per cent in December 1990. The decrease in the index was mainly due to a 10.8 per cent fall in prices for refined petroleum products. This reduction, like the successive rises of the previous four months (16%, 21.2%, 11.8% and 5.4%) was associated with the movements in world oil prices. Lower prices for basic non-ferrous metals also contributed to the fall in the index.

#### Big changes in market share as motor vehicle registrations keep falling

Final figures for December 1990 indicate new motor vehicle registrations totalled 42,209, a fall of 11.1 per cent from the November figure of 47,484. In seasonally adjusted terms this equated to a decline of 7.1 per cent, while the trend fell by 2.3 per cent. This was the eighth consecutive month that the trend declined.

#### Price increases ease for building materials

Prices for house building materials increased by 0.3 per cent, while materials used in other than house building showed an increase of 0.2 per cent in December 1990.

#### Export prices fall

Export prices fell by 2.0 per cent between November and December 1990, bringing them back to the same level as one year earlier.

#### Construction activity falls to 1988 level

Total construction activity fell by \$227 million or 3.5 per cent to \$6,343 million between June and September quarters 1990, in constant price seasonally adjusted terms. This fall brought construction activity back to a level similar to that of September quarter 1988. The latest data continued the 12 month decline which followed six years of growth between 1983 and 1989.

#### NSW more energy conscious

The number of NSW households using insulation increased significantly over the five years October 1984 to October 1989. A new Australian Bureau of Statistics publication has revealed homes with roof insulation rose from 663,200 (37%) to 810,000 (42%) while homes with wall insulation increased from 179,200 (10%) to 251,100 (13%) over the same period.

#### Housing finance turns down again

Seasonally adjusted housing finance commitments for December 1990 were \$1,533.8 million, a decrease of \$93.3 million (5.7%) on November 1990 but an increase of \$95.4 million (6.6%) compared with December 1989.

#### Red meat production down

Red meat production for December 1990 fell by 14.7 per cent on the November figure in original terms, however seasonally adjusted production rose by 5.1 per cent. Over three-quarters of this increase can be attributed to beef production, which rose 6.0 per cent.

#### Half the population covered by private health insurance

A Health Insurance Survey conducted in June 1990 showed that an estimated 8.9 million persons or about 52 per cent of the Australian population were covered by private health insurance.

#### The biggest ever library of Australian history ... is also the smallest

The Australian Bureau of Statistics two-part *Colonial and Historical Microfiche Series* is without doubt the biggest ever library of Australian historical facts and statistics. But by being available on microfiche, it might also claim to be the smallest.

*Continued from page i*

The framework model is based on this transaction which comprises three elements:

Consumer ⇒ Product ⇒ Supplier

The statistics either measure a relationship between two of these elements e.g. value of purchases of food (product) by day visitors (consumer), or describes some aspect of one of the elements e.g. number of employees in the accommodation sector (supplier).

The order of the elements and the arrows between them indicate a hierarchical relationship. The principal element is the "consumer". If the consumer meets the definition of a "visitor" then the "product" and, consequently, the "supplier" involved in the transaction are relevant. For example, a restaurant meal can be supplied to a visitor or a resident. In principle, if the consumer is a visitor then the transaction would be included, but if the consumer is a resident then it would not be included. (However, in practice, of course, such distinctions cannot always be made.)

The framework provides classification systems for each of the three elements. The "consumer" is classified as:

- international visitor
  - overnight visitor
  - day visitor
- domestic visitor
  - overnight visitor
  - day visitor

The "product" is classified into ten broad product/service groups:

- accommodation
- food and drink
- transport
- entertainment/leisure
- sporting activities
- business services
- education/training
- health
- other goods and services
- package tours

These broad groups are further broken down into detailed categories.

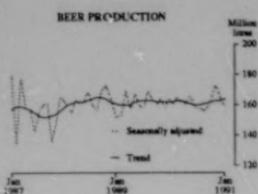
The "supplier" is classified according to the Australian Standard Industrial Classification (ASIC).

Associated with each of the three elements is a list of "typical measures", for example age and sex for "consumers", expenditure for "products", and number of establishments for "suppliers". The framework provides classification systems and definitions for all of the typical measures.

The framework is not intended to apply only to ABS collections. Its main value lies in providing consistent standards which could be used by all collectors and users of tourism statistics.

The framework is now at draft stage and the ABS is inviting comments on the draft proposals from interested bodies. Anyone interested in commenting should contact the Tourism Statistics Section of the ABS in Canberra on (06) 252 6348.

## Manufacturing in brief



Readers are reminded that production of manufacturing commodities can vary quite significantly on a month-to-month basis, even after seasonal adjustment.

The 'previous year' column is a rather more reliable guide, but even it should be treated with some caution unless read in conjunction with the more detailed data presented in each monthly publication.

The seasonally adjusted estimates for the production of some commodities show large movements between December 1990 and January 1991. Factors known to have affected some of these series are as follows:

- iron and steel production in January 1991 was affected by difficulties in production processes.
- there were longer than normal shutdown periods in January 1991 which affected some producers of bricks, clothes washing machines and chocolate based confectionery.
- there were shorter shutdown periods in January 1991 for some producers of cotton yarn, refrigerators, lawn mowers and textile floor coverings.

MANUFACTURING PRODUCTION, JANUARY 1991  
Seasonally adjusted, percentage change

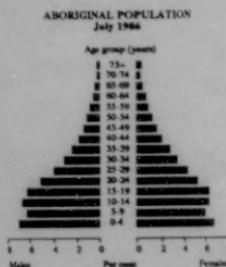
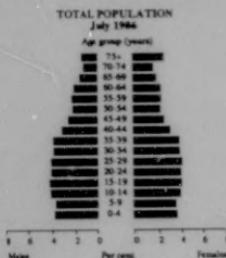
| Product   | From previous month | From corresponding month of previous year |
|---|---------------------|---|
| Cotton yarn                                     | 128.3               | 85.3                                      |
| Domestic refrigerators                          | 26.3                | 47.4                                      |
| Woven cotton fabric (including towelling)       | 35.4                | 46.3                                      |
| Petrol-rotary type lawn mowers                  | 30.2                | 38.5                                      |
| Television sets                                 | 5.8                 | 29.5                                      |
| Textile floor coverings                         | 37.9                | 17.8                                      |
| Wool yarn                                       | 12.6                | 14.0                                      |
| Electric motors                                 | 17.2                | 9.3                                       |
| Electricity                                     | 3.2                 | 6.1                                       |
| Bloom and slabs                                 | -5.1                | 5.1                                       |
| Woven man-made fibre fabric                     | -20.9               | 3.0                                       |
| Woven wool fabric (including blanketing)        | -19.0               | -0.8                                      |
| Gas available for issue through mains           | 3.0                 | -3.0                                      |
| Beer  | -3.4                | -3.3                                      |
| Other confectionery                             | 4.9                 | -4.1                                      |
| Cars and station wagons                         | 52.9                | -8.3                                      |
| Basic iron, spiegeleisen and sponge iron        | -11.0               | -14.1                                     |
| Iron and steel in ingots or other primary forms | -13.9               | -17.3                                     |
| Chocolate based confectionery                   | -38.2               | -18.1                                     |
| Portland cement                                 | -5.4                | -18.7                                     |
| Domestic clothes washing machines               | -17.2               | -23.4                                     |
| Clay bricks                                     | -17.4               | -29.8                                     |
| Sulphuric acid; oleum                           | 11.6                | -30.0                                     |
| Motor vehicles for goods and materials          | 31.1                | -33.2                                     |

## The first national ABS profile of Australia's Aboriginal people

At the 1986 Census, almost 228,000 Australians, or 1.5 per cent of the population, identified themselves as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.

The Aboriginal population was predominantly young with over half being aged under 20 years. Three quarters of Aboriginal families had dependent children compared with less than half of all Australian families.

*Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People* presents a thorough statistical profile of contemporary Aboriginal society as drawn by the 1986 Census. The report provides information on where Aboriginal people lived, their demographic characteristics, living arrangements and education. It also provides data on Aboriginal employment and income.



ABORIGINAL POPULATION, JULY 1986

| State/Territory              | Number  | Percentage of total Aboriginal population | Percentage of State population |
|------------------------------|---------|---|--------------------------------|
| New South Wales              | 59,011  | 25.9                                      | 1.1                            |
| Victoria                     | 12,611  | 5.5                                       | 0.3                            |
| Queensland                   | 61,268  | 26.9                                      | 2.4                            |
| South Australia              | 14,291  | 6.3                                       | 1.1                            |
| Western Australia            | 37,789  | 16.6                                      | 2.7                            |
| Tasmania                     | 6,716   | 3.0                                       | 1.5                            |
| Northern Territory           | 34,739  | 15.3                                      | 22.4                           |
| Australian Capital Territory | 1,220   | 0.5                                       | 0.5                            |
| <i>Total</i>                 | 227,645 | 100.0                                     | 1.5                            |

Other findings presented in this 59 page publication include:

- 33 per cent of Aboriginal people lived in rural areas, compared with 15 per cent of all Australians;
- 42 per cent of Aboriginal people aged five years and over who lived in rural areas spoke an Aboriginal language at home;
- 9 per cent of Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over held post-school qualifications, compared with 26 per cent of all Australians aged 15 years and over;
- nearly half of Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over were not in the labour force;
- of those in the labour force, 35 per cent were unemployed;
- almost two-thirds of Aboriginal people had an individual annual income of \$9,000 or less.

For further information, order the publication Census 86 — Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (2503.0), or contact Dot Russell on (06) 252 6214.

## New major resource for secondary Australian Studies

The ABS in Victoria has developed a comprehensive book of source data and commentary for senior secondary students of Australian Studies. Written with Victorian Year 11 students in mind, *Australia - Working It Out!* is proving to have much wider appeal throughout Australia. It provides discussion on many areas of the curriculum and introduces students to data usage techniques relevant to their research tasks in Australian Studies and other subjects.

The publication had its origins in a request from the Victorian Ministry of Education that the ABS provide statistical material to schools in a form suited to the classroom. The curriculum authorities were consulted, as well as teachers from different types of schools, and many of their suggestions on contents were incorporated.

Statistical material has been selected to emphasise the ability of time series data to demonstrate the effects of change and show how statistical classifications reflect changing social perceptions.

Students are motivated to use statistics for investigative purposes, thus encouraging a critical approach that will stay with them throughout their lives. Statistical concepts are explained and examples are given of the limitations and pitfalls of statistical usage. The first chapter on the use of statistics has a more general application than Australian Studies. The contents include:

- Collecting data — censuses, surveys, administrative by-products and other methods;
- Organising data — classifying the data, tables, standardising the data, graphs, graphical distortion;
- Interpreting data — how you might analyse data, statistics which mislead.

The remaining four chapters are centred around specific propositions from the Australian Studies design manual and contain both data and commentary on such topics as the meaning of work, the national accounts, unpaid household work, gross domestic product, components of population growth, patterns of settlement, occupation, industry, part-time employment, gender, ethnicity, race and birthplace, investment, productivity, profit levels, and many more.

*For further information, order the publication Australia - Working It Out! (1332.2), or contact Bill Wain on (03) 615 7373.*

## Feature article

A removable supplement is included in this issue between pages 6 and 7. This contains a feature on tourism as part of an occasional series and a synopsis of *Statistics Weekly* articles released in February 1991.

## Inquiries

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### Suggestions

Any suggestions for improvement to this publication should be addressed to:

Robert Nixon  
Editor  
*Statistics Weekly*  
(06) 252 6104

## All the week's releases: 27 February to 5 March

### General

- Statistics Weekly, 28 February 1991 (1318.0; \$4.00)
- Australian Economic Indicators, February 1991 (1350.0; \$24.00)
- Monthly Summary of Statistics, NSW, February 1991 (1305.1; \$13.50)
- Economic Indicators, NSW, February 1991 (1307.1; \$5.00)
- Monthly Summary of Statistics, Vic., February 1991 (1303.2; \$10.00)
- Stats Pack, Vic., 1991 (1330.2; free)
- Monthly Summary of Statistics, Qld, February 1991 (1304.3; \$9.00)
- Monthly Summary of Statistics, WA, February 1991 (1305.5; \$10.00)
- Monthly Summary of Statistics, SA, February 1991 (1303.4; \$9.00)

### Demography

- Estimated Residential Population in Statistical Local Areas, Vic., 1990, Preliminary (3203.2; \$9.00)

### Social statistics

- Apparent Consumption of Foodstuffs and Nutrients, Aust., 1987-88 (4306.0; \$30.00)

### National accounts, finance and foreign trade

- Foreign Investment, Aust., December Qtr 1990, Preliminary (5307.0; \$10.00)
- Exports, Aust., Monthly Summary Tables, December 1990 (5432.0; \$8.00)
- Private New Capital Expenditure, Aust., Actual and Expected Expenditure to June 1992, December Qtr 1990 Survey, Preliminary, (5625.0; \$10.00)
- Cash Management Trusts, Aust., January 1991 (5635.0; \$4.50)
- Personal Finance, Aust., December 1990 (5642.0; \$5.50)
- Commercial Finance, Aust., November 1990 (5643.0; \$5.50)
- Lease Finance, Aust., December 1990 (5644.0; \$5.50)
- Company Profits, Aust., December Qtr 1990 (5651.0; \$10.00)

### Labour statistics and prices

- The Labour Force, Aust., January 1991 (6203.0; \$14.50)
- Industrial Disputes, Aust., November 1990 (6321.0; \$7.00)
- Price Indexes of Materials Used in Manufacturing Industries, Aust., December 1990 (6411.0; \$10.00)

### Agriculture

- Crops, Pastures and Fruit, Vic., 1989-90 (7330.2; \$25.00) — new issue
- Agricultural Land Use and Selected Inputs, WA, 1989-90 (7411.5; \$15.00)

### Secondary industry and distribution

- Manufacturing Production, Aust., January 1991, Preliminary (8301.0; \$10.00)
- Manufacturing Production, Aust., Household Appliances and Electrical Equipment, December 1990 (8357.0; \$6.50)
- Manufacturing Production, Aust., Plastics, Rubber, Paints, Detergents and Industrial Chemicals, December 1990 (8362.0; \$6.50)
- Retail Trade, Aust., December 1990 Supplement (8501.0; free)
- Building Approvals, Aust., January 1991 (8731.0; \$12.50)
- Production Statistics, NSW, December 1990 (8304.1; \$7.50)
- Building Activity, NSW, September Qtr 1990 (8752.1; \$10.00)
- Building Approvals, Vic., January 1991 (8731.2; \$10.00)
- Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities, Vic., December 1991 (8741.2; \$10.00)
- Tourist Accommodation, September Qtr 1990, Preliminary (8636.5; \$3.50)
- Building Approvals, WA, January 1991 (8731.5; \$10.00)
- Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities, WA, December 1990 (8741.5; \$10.00)
- Tourist Accommodation, SA, September Qtr 1990 (8635.4; \$10.00)
- Building Approvals, SA, January 1991 (8731.4; \$10.00)
- Manufacturing Industry, Tas., 1988-89 (8221.6; \$9.00) — new issue
- Building Approvals, NT, January 1991 (8731.7; \$5.50)

### Transport

- Registrations of New Motor Vehicles, Aust., January 1991, Preliminary (9301.0; \$10.00)

- Motor Vehicle Registrations, Qld, January 1991 (9303.3; \$10.00)

## Calendar of key releases

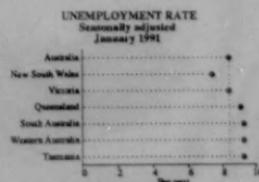
Expected releases over the fortnight to 19 March 1991

### March

- [6] Balance of Payments, Australia, January 1991 (5301.0; \$15.00)
- [ ] Import Price Index, Australia, December Quarter 1990 (6414.0; \$9.00)
- [7] Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, November 1990, Preliminary (6301.0; \$10.00)
- [8] Balance of Payments, Australia, December Quarter 1990 (5302.0; \$20.00)
- [ ] Stocks, Manufacturers' Sales, December Quarter 1990 and Expected Sales to December 1991, Australia (5629.0; \$10.00)
- [12] Quarterly Indexes of Industrial Production, Australia, December Quarter 1990 (8125.0; \$10.00)
- [13] Building Activity, Australia: Dwelling Unit Commencements, December Quarter 1990, Preliminary (8750.0; \$10.00)
- [14] The Labour Force, Australia, February 1991, Preliminary (6202.0; \$10.00)
- [ ] Retail Trade, Australia, January 1991 (8501.0; \$10.00)

## The latest ...

Changes to key State indicators — consolidated to  
5 March 1991



|  | NSW   | Vic.  | Qld   | SA   | WA    | Tas.  | NT    | ACT  | Aust. |
|--|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|
| — Percentage change from same period previous year —                       |       |       |       |      |       |       |       |      |       |
| New capital expenditure<br>(Sept. qtr 90)*                                 | -0.9  | -10.9 | 5.4   | 11.2 | -17.9 | 37.2  | n.a.  | n.a. | -3.4  |
| Retail turnover (Dec. 90)<br>(trend estimate)                              | 3.6   | -3.2  | 4.4   | 8.8  | 2.1   | 4.8   | n.a.  | 7.6  | 2.4   |
| New motor vehicle<br>registrations (Jan. 91)†                              | -22.3 | -11.6 | -16.3 | -4.9 | -22.7 | -20.2 | -20.4 | 0.3  | -18.0 |
| Number of dwelling unit<br>approvals (Jan. 91)                             | 0.6   | -11.8 | 8.2   | 17.8 | -33.3 | -12.9 | 202.2 | -1.9 | -3.7  |
| Value of total building work<br>done (Sept. qtr 90)                        | -7.2  | -7.7  | -14.0 | -6.3 | -25.8 | -18.8 | -1.0  | -9.0 | -10.6 |
| Employed persons<br>(January 91)‡  | 0.6   | -2.4  | -0.6  | 0.3  | 0.7   | 1.2   | -10.1 | 2.8  | -0.5  |
| Capital city consumer<br>price index (Dec. qtr 90)                         | 6.4   | 7.4   | 6.2   | 7.8  | 7.4   | 6.1   | 7.1   | 6.8  | 6.9   |
| Average weekly earnings (full-<br>time adult ordinary time)<br>(August 90) | 5.4   | 7.0   | 6.9   | 7.3  | 7.9   | 6.9   | 6.9   | 6.8  | 6.4   |
| Population (June 90)   | 1.0   | 1.4   | 2.6   | 1.0  | 2.5   | 1.2   | 0.6   | 2.3  | 1.5   |
| Room nights in licensed<br>hotels and motels, etc<br>(June qtr 90)         | 5.4   | -0.9  | 5.7   | 5.5  | -4.1  | -1.2  | 8.5   | 14.8 | 3.6   |

\* Seasonally adjusted except for NT and ACT. † Seasonally adjusted except for Tas., NT and ACT.

# The latest ...

12

Key national indicators – consolidated to 5 March 1991

|  | Period           | Latest figure available    |                        | Percentage change (a) on |                                   |
|--|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|  |                  | Original                   | Seasonally<br>adjusted | Previous<br>period       | Corresponding<br>period last year |
| <b>National production</b>                                       |                  |                            |                        |                          |                                   |
| Gross domestic product   | \$m              | Sept. qtr 90               | 93,635                 | 93,427                   | -0.8                              |
| — current prices   |                  |                            | 63,522                 | 63,570                   | -1.6                              |
| — 1984-85 prices   |                  |                            |                        |                          | -3.6                              |
| New capital expenditure  | \$m              | Dec. qtr 90                | 7,305                  | 6,612                    | 3.2                               |
| — current prices   |                  |                            | 5,542                  | 5,021                    | 3.6                               |
| — 1984-85 prices   |                  | Three months<br>to Dec. 90 | 8,311                  | n.a.                     | -5.7                              |
| Expected new capital<br>expenditure                              | "                | December 90                | 9,395                  | 7,655                    | -0.9                              |
| Retail turnover  | — current prices | "                          | 16,480                 | 14,620                   | -1.6                              |
| — 1984-85 prices   |                  | Dec. qtr 90                |                        |                          | -6                                |
| New motor vehicle registrations                                  | no.              | January 91                 | 36,544                 | 43,963                   | 0.8                               |
| Dwelling unit approvals  | "                | January 91                 | 9,189                  | 10,784                   | -18.0                             |
| Value of all building approvals                                  | \$m              | "                          | 1,501                  | 1,668                    | -5.9                              |
| Value of total building work done                                | "                | Sept. qtr 90               | 7,214                  | 6,951                    | -3.7                              |
| — current prices   | "                | "                          | 4,536                  | 4,390                    | -4.2                              |
| — 1984-85 prices   |                  |                            |                        |                          | -10.6                             |
| Manufacturers' sales   | "                | Sept. qtr 90               | 35,796                 | 34,854                   | -2.7                              |
| Expected manufacturers'<br>sales                                 | "                | Three months<br>to Dec. 90 | 37,757                 | n.a.                     | -0.9                              |
| Labour   |                  |                            |                        |                          | 0.3                               |
| Employed persons   | '000             | January 91                 | 7,668.8                | 7,822.9                  | -0.4                              |
| Unemployment rate †  | %                | "                          | 9.1                    | 8.4                      | 0.3                               |
| Participation rate †   | %                | "                          | 63.0                   | 63.8                     | -0.1                              |
| Job vacancies  | '000             | November 90                | 34.1                   | 35.4                     | -27.8                             |
| Average weekly overtime<br>per employee                          | hours            | "                          | 1.3                    | 1.3                      | -1.9                              |
| Prices, profits and wages  |                  |                            |                        |                          | -16.2                             |
| Consumer price index   | 1980-81 = 100.0  | Dec. qtr 90                | 214.5                  | n.a.                     | 2.7                               |
| Price index of materials used in<br>manufacturing industries     | 1984-85 = 100.0  | December 90                | 128.8                  | n.a.                     | -3.7                              |
| Price index of articles produced<br>by manufacturing industry    | 1988-89 = 100.0  | December 90                | 112.8                  | n.a.                     | -0.6                              |
| Company profits before income tax                                | \$m              | Dec. qtr 90                | 4,640                  | 3,911                    | 15.9                              |
| Average weekly earnings<br>(Full-time adults; ordinary time) (f) | \$               | August 90                  | 541.00                 | n.a.                     | 1.3                               |
| Interest rates (b) (monthly average)                             | % per annum      | January 91                 | 11.85                  | n.a.                     | -0.20                             |
| 90-day bank bills †  |                  | "                          | 11.50                  | n.a.                     | -0.55                             |
| 10-year Treasury bonds †   |                  |                            |                        |                          | -4.80                             |
| Balance of payments  |                  |                            |                        |                          | -1.30                             |
| Exports of merchandise (c)                                       | \$m              | December 90                | 4,317                  | 4,104                    | -6.8                              |
| Imports of merchandise (c)                                       | "                | "                          | 3,963                  | 4,344                    | -1.9                              |
| Balance on merchandise trade (c) (c)                             | "                | "                          | 354                    | -240                     | 15.8                              |
| Balance of goods and services (c) (c)                            | "                | "                          | 158                    | -561                     | n.a.                              |
| Balance on current account (c) (c)                               | "                | "                          | -1,069                 | -1,775                   | -30.2                             |
| Terms of trade (d)   | 1984-85 = 100.0  | Sept. qtr 90               | n.a.                   | 105.3                    | 5.8                               |
| Foreign investment   |                  |                            |                        |                          | -1.8                              |
| Net foreign debt   | \$m              | 30 Dec. 90                 | 130,771                | n.a.                     | 1.9                               |
| Net foreign liabilities  |                  | "                          | 172,363                | n.a.                     | 5.6                               |
| Exchange rates (monthly average)                                 |                  |                            |                        |                          |                                   |
| SUS (e)  | per \$A          | December 90                | 0.7699                 | n.a.                     | -0.6                              |
| Trade weighted index (e)   | May 1970 = 100.0 | "                          | 56.7                   | n.a.                     | -0.9                              |
| Other indicators   |                  |                            |                        |                          | -2.1                              |
| Population (resident at end of qtr)                              | million          | June 90                    | 17.1                   | n.a.                     | 0.3                               |
| Overseas visitor arrivals  | '000             | September 90               | 163                    | 190                      | -3.2                              |
|  |                  |                            |                        |                          | 1.5                               |
|  |                  |                            |                        |                          | 6.2                               |

(a) Based on seasonally adjusted figures where available. (b) Source Reserve Bank of Australia. (c) For percentage changes, a minus sign indicates an increase in the deficit; no sign means a decrease in the deficit or an increase in the surplus. (d) The ratio of the price of goods and services for exports to that for imports. (e) Later figures released on Wednesday, 6 March 1991. (f) Later figures expected to be released Thursday, 7 March 1991.

NOTE: Data shown in terms of percentage points. n.a. = not available.

Figures have been taken from a variety of ABS publications. Copies may be obtained from Information Services (see page 10).

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